



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

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# Standing Committee on Science and Research

EVIDENCE

**NUMBER 022**

Monday, February 2, 2026

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Chair: Salma Zahid





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Monday, February 2, 2026

• (1535)

[English]

**The Chair (Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre—Don Valley East, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 22 of the Standing Committee on Science and Research.

The committee is meeting to study the mandates of the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation.

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and the members. Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French. This is a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

With that, for today's meeting, I would like to welcome our witnesses.

We have the Honourable Evan Solomon, Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation. Welcome, Minister.

From the Department of Industry, we have Mark Schaan, associate deputy minister.

Minister, you will have five minutes for your opening remarks, and then we will go to the rounds of questioning.

The floor is yours. Thanks a lot for appearing before the committee.

[Translation]

**Hon. Evan Solomon (Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[English]

Members of the committee, thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before you today.

As you said, Madam Chair, I am joined by officials from my department. I appreciate the committee's interest in this work.

[Translation]

AI is rapidly evolving, and Canadians know it.

[English]

They see AI at school, in health care and in their daily lives, sometimes with excitement and sometimes with concern.

Around the world, countries are racing to turn new ideas into real-world tools and real-world jobs.

[Translation]

That is true here, as it is elsewhere around the world.

[English]

The countries that succeed will be those that use this technology responsibly, in ways that people can trust and that actually make life better for them. AI is meant to serve people, not the other way around.

When I was appointed as Canada's first Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation, it sent a clear signal: Canada is not going to sit on the sidelines of this transformation. We intend to help lead it in a way that delivers real benefits to all Canadians.

To do that, my mandate is anchored in one core principle and three pillars. The core principle is simple: AI for all. The three pillars are these: build, empower and protect.

“AI for all” means this: No matter where you live in Canada, no matter your background, no matter your age, no matter your income, this technology will work for you responsibly, reliably and safely. It will strengthen our economy. It will deliver better public services. It will create good jobs for Canadians and protect people, especially children and vulnerable communities, from harm.

“AI for all” is not a slogan. It's already being put into action, and it is guiding the final stages of our refreshed national AI strategy, which we will launch this quarter.

That strategy is being shaped by real input: ideas shared by Canadians through our public portal, expert advice from our AI task force and insights from researchers, workers and industry leaders across the country. The goal is simple: to set a clear direction for where Canada is going on AI and how we get there on our own terms.

Let me briefly walk you through what the three pillars—build, empower and protect—mean in practice.

The first is “build”. We will build a strong, sovereign and safe AI foundation to drive economic growth and create prosperity. That requires, first, infrastructure. In plain terms, it requires the computing power that allows Canadian companies, especially the small and medium-sized companies that make up 95% of our economy, to build, use and scale new technologies here at home. It's why we launched Canada's sovereign AI compute strategy, backed by a \$2-billion investment, including the AI compute access fund. This is about making sure Canadian firms have access to the tools they need to grow, compete and create jobs right here at home.

Building on this work, budget 2025 allows our government to enter into agreements to support the development of AI data centres here in Canada, strengthening our digital infrastructure and expanding our domestic compute capacity. In real terms, that means more opportunities for Canadian innovators, more resilience for our economy and more jobs staying right here at home.

It's also about modern digital sovereignty. Sovereignty is not isolation. It means having the capacity to choose where we build, where we scale and where value stays. It means keeping Canadian intellectual property here in Canada so that we're not simply a farm team for other economies but a country that builds and benefits from our own innovation.

[*Translation*]

It's a matter of digital sovereignty and choice for Canada.

• (1540)

The second pillar is accountability.

[*English*]

Canada already has extraordinary strengths in talent and research. Our three national AI institutes—Mila in Montreal, Vector in Toronto, and Amii in Edmonton—are global anchors of excellence built by the pioneers who helped shape and build modern AI.

Our focus now is to shorten the distance between impact and insight, turning Canada's world-leading AI science into real adoption, higher productivity, and companies that scale right here at home, including through initiatives like the brand new \$100-million venture scientist fund launched by Mila and Inovia just a number of weeks ago. That progress only matters if Canadians are part of it. That fund will help turn scientists' ideas into new businesses. Investing in skills and training is essential to making sure people in every region succeed in an AI-driven economy.

[*Translation*]

This is about jobs, skills and the future for Canadians.

[*English*]

We're also investing in the next frontier of advanced technology, quantum. Most people don't think about quantum every day, but it does matter. Quantum technologies will shape the future of security, encryption and computing power. Investing now ensures that Canada stays ahead, using Canadian tech to protect Canadian interests. Through the new Canadian quantum champions program, announced in December, we're supporting Canadian-headquartered quantum companies, anchoring talent and expertise here at home.

I know we're running short.

**The Chair:** Can you wind it up?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Yes.

The third pillar is “protect”. Trust underpins everything. That's why we launched the Canadian Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute. That's why we're committed to modernizing our privacy framework to protect Canadians' data, safeguard children online and ensure that, as AI evolves, people's rights, data and privacy remain safe and at the centre of our approach.

AI is moving quickly, and so are we. That's why I'm so glad to be here to talk about our new plan on how to make sure we build a reliable, safe and prosperous Canada, using AI as a tool to serve Canadians.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

We now start our round of questioning. The first round will be six minutes each.

We start with MP Baldinelli.

Please go ahead. You have six minutes.

**Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls—Niagara-on-the-Lake, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here today. However, I must say I'm a little disappointed in your appearance today. When this committee passed a motion on December 1, which was passed unanimously by this committee, the ask was for you to appear for two hours, yet somehow, last week, we found out that you changed your schedule and you're only appearing for an hour today.

In your remarks, you use words like “racing”, and your policy program talks about a “national sprint” and a “focused sprint”. Why are you racing out the door after only one hour today?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** First of all, I'm delighted to be back here, Madam Chair, and I appreciate the invitation.

As you know, I was delighted to appear, in December, for an hour. I was asked back to appear again. I'm delighted to appear today to talk about the mandate, and I'm here with my team to answer any questions.

• (1545)

**Tony Baldinelli:** Perhaps you can stay for the full two hours, then, if that's the case.

Minister, you talk about the strategy of “AI for all”. One key pillar is to build. You used the words “build...strong, sovereign, safe”, and to do that requires infrastructure.

At our last hearing, Minister, we had representatives from Electricity Canada, OPG and the Canadian Nuclear Association. Would you not agree that energy will be one of the fundamental needs of the built infrastructure required for successful AI implementation in this country?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** It's another great question.

You're absolutely right: Part of building sovereign AI will require building infrastructure, and that's why I've had meetings with the provinces and territories. As you know, it's a very big part for the provinces and the territories to make sure they have the infrastructure available to build a prosperous Canada.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Minister, as part of the national task force study—that race, that sprint, to get that study—why were these stakeholder groups—these important stakeholder groups—excluded from the national task force?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, as you are aware, we have now published the reports of our 28 task force members. They're available to the public, in both official languages, as I talked about. Indeed, questions about infrastructure and energy very much surfaced in our task force.

Again, as you know, I work very closely with Minister Hodgson and our other ministers who are—

**Tony Baldinelli:** Minister, it's going to be huge.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —building the infrastructure—

**The Chair:** Could I please request one person at a time?

Please allow the minister to answer the question.

**Tony Baldinelli:** My understanding is that one data centre alone could be 300 megawatts. The small modular reactor currently being built in Darlington is 300 megawatts itself. Without safe, reliable power, our AI strategy is doomed to failure.

The Independent Electricity System Operator did a study in 2023. It showed that moving Ontario to a clean grid by 2050 is going to take from 42,000 megawatts to 88,000 megawatts. It's going to cost \$400 billion and require six times the 14,000 workers currently in the field. How are we going to go about that, if we're going to grow a sovereign AI industry sector for all, without a clean and reliable source of energy?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Madam Chair, I'm very glad to raise the issue of energy. Regarding the new nuclear facility at Darlington, as the member may know, the federal government has announced our investment of \$2 billion. That will generate 3,500 megawatts of power.

We are very well aware of small modular nuclear reactors that Ontario has invested in. We have the north coast transmission line project in B.C. that we're supporting as well. In Alberta, for example.... Just remember that provincial regulators are in charge of the energy grids. That's why you saw that the Alberta Energy Regulator released 1,200 megawatts that will go toward a data centre. We work with the provinces, but as you are well aware, it is the regulators of the province that release their power allocations.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Minister, going to the MOU agreement you have with Cohere to examine AI efficiencies within the government, are there any guardrails with regard to Cohere's participation?

They're going to be providing you with a report, I would imagine, as part of this MOU, on what could take place and how AI can be implemented. Will there be, for example, a procurement process put in place, or will they simply prepare a report to say that they have the capabilities to assist government and to provide the functionality you need? Would it not be better if we had an open, fair and transparent procurement process in place? Is that in the MOU?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** We are very delighted to have signed a memorandum of understanding with Cohere. Again, we are one of the four countries that have a large language model. The U.S. has a bunch. China has a bunch. There's one in France, and here in Canada, we have Cohere. We believe that is strategically important.

We are very happy to have signed a memorandum of understanding. They are going through the exact, proper channels to make sure that they are used inside government to find efficiencies in government as part of that process and as part of our office of government transformation. It is very important to use and buy Canadian and to be a customer for Canadian companies.

• (1550)

**Tony Baldinelli:** Have you legally engaged Cohere to provide those services? If so, was there an open, fair and transparent procurement process?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting. The time is up. Maybe you will have an opportunity to respond in the second round.

We will now proceed to MP Rana for six minutes.

MP Rana, please go ahead.

**Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, Minister Solomon, for being here with us.

In my riding of Hamilton Centre, universities and research institutions are leading advances in artificial intelligence. As the minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, in your view, what potential does AI have to drive economic growth and productivity in southern Ontario?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** First of all, thank you for the question. I really appreciate that.

When we say “AI for all”, AI is going to benefit all provinces, and I hope Canadians listening to this appreciate that it is. Even though I'm the minister for economic development for southern Ontario, in my capacity as Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation we are making sure this benefits all Canadians across this country from coast to coast to coast, whether rural or urban.

Part of the goal of our national AI strategy is to make sure we are building the infrastructure and supporting small and medium-sized businesses through things like our AI compute strategy and our \$300-million AI compute access fund to make sure that small and medium-sized businesses have access to the compute power they need to grow their businesses.

We were very pleased, by the way, to know that when we opened up that fund in the summer, over 1,000 applicants applied. In other words, the demand for that kind of support in our innovation economy is very strong.

I should say one last thing: At the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario—I know this is where the member's riding is really important—we have a special fund for artificial intelligence as well. In the last decade, we've invested more than \$420 million in projects that have had a component of AI adoption. Remember that many of those investments are zero-interest loans to the companies that repay them. By the way, this is in every riding—Conservative ridings, Liberal ridings—where innovation is happening, and we're very proud of that.

In Ontario alone, there are 400,000 workers in the innovation sector. Across this country, the fastest-growing job sector is the digital sector. Over 800,000 people work in that sector, and about 150,000 people are already in the AI sector alone. Investing in this has already been hugely impactful and has created good jobs for Canadians.

**Aslam Rana:** Thank you very much.

I'm thankful to you for announcing \$1 million for my riding, and I'm expecting more as well.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Aslam Rana:** My next question is this: How does the government plan to protect our digital sovereignty while negotiating with an increasingly hostile southern neighbour?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Thank you so much for the question.

The member's question is actually core to our national strategy, Madam Chair. That is why the Prime Minister asked me and the department to accelerate our national AI strategy by almost two years because of the importance of building a sovereign AI to make sure we not only have the data centres and the talent but have the ability to drive commercialization.

We have a great talent and research ecosystem here. This is going to be enhanced by our \$1.7-billion talent attraction strategy, which will attract 1,000 new scientists and labs to Canada and is the most aggressive in the G7. We're very proud of that, but we have to make sure we can translate it into commercialization in order to keep the jobs and the intellectual property here.

If the member doesn't mind, for one minute, I'll discuss why that is so important, just so folks appreciate it. In the data and AI economy, having control of your intellectual property is really important, because we don't want to essentially pay rent to use other countries' material. If we build it here and keep it here, it means we're growing the jobs and the innovation here in Canada. That is really a core part of sovereignty.

One final part is making sure we have the skilled workforce to use these tools, and we're investing in that as well.

● (1555)

**Aslam Rana:** Perhaps my next question is this: Given recent changes, what is the government doing to ensure that top global talent can come here quickly and contribute to our research ecosystem?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, I appreciate the question very much.

The talent attraction stream is really important. It's built on a good foundation.

We have our three national institutes that we started. Again, some Canadians may not appreciate these, but we have, in Toronto, Vector, headed by Geoffrey Hinton, who won the Nobel Prize and is essentially the godfather of AI. He also won the Turing prize. In Montreal, we have Mila, headed by Yoshua Bengio. He won the Turing prize. It's the Nobel Prize of technology. In Edmonton, we have Ami, the machine learning institute. That's headed by another scientist, named Rich Sutton, who is a Turing prize winner. We have three institutes that are churning out the best and the brightest. They're working with universities such as Sherbrooke, the University of Toronto, Waterloo, the University of Victoria, and UBC.

We have great talent. We have to keep them here. The first way to do this is to attract more talent to come with this talent attraction stream. Not only the scientists, but the labs come. That means the students come, and that means the innovation comes here.

I will say that our CIFAR chairs and our research chairs are turning out incredible work in journals.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The time is up for MP Rana.

**Aslam Rana:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will now proceed to MP Blanchette-Joncas for six minutes.

Please go ahead.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like to welcome the minister who is with us today. I really liked some parts of his speech, including one passage in particular. I hope it will be shared with his colleagues. The minister pointed out that sovereignty is not isolation.

Minister, you will understand that Quebec's sovereignty is not about isolation; it is about connecting with the community of nations around the world.

That said, let's get back to the subject at hand today: artificial intelligence.

Minister, you were here on December 3. I asked you some pretty straightforward questions in terms of your public consultation, and you said that 11,300 public submissions had been received. You said you were very proud of this high level of participation, which was the largest digital public consultation in the history of the industry. You said the process was completely transparent and that it would soon be published online.

Minister, when will the briefs submitted during this public consultation be available?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Thank you for the question.

I have good news for MPs today.

[English]

As of today, the department has posted online not only all of the 28 task force reports but also the summaries of the 11,000 interventions and contributions, which we really appreciate, from the public. That is all online. I'm glad you asked about it. It's all available now.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Mr. Minister, the submissions are now online and anyone can look at them.

Is that correct?

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Yes.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** That's perfect.

How long have they been online, exactly?

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** I'm not sure of the exact time, but I think it went on very recently.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Can you ask your deputy minister? I don't think you know.

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Yes. It may have gone on today, this morning.

[Translation]

**Mark Schaun (Associate Deputy Minister, Department of Industry):** The 28,000 submissions from the task force members

were published today, this afternoon, and the summary of all the other submissions is available now, I think.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Do you think so or do you know?

**Mark Schaun:** I can look at my phone, but it's online now—

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Listen, you're telling me—

**Mark Schaun:** Today.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** You're telling me that this is the largest public consultation in history. It is historic, and you and the minister aren't even able to agree on the date. I am not referring to the expert panel; I mean the 11,300 submissions filed as part of the public consultations.

Can you give me a date?

**Mark Schaun:** Today.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Okay.

How long have the expert panel submissions been online?

**Mark Schaun:** Since today. They are now public.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** The minister just said it was since January 28. Can you agree on your dates?

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Sure. The expert testimony, as I understand it.... Everything went online today. It is public and should be accessible right now.

• (1600)

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** That's perfect.

Mr. Minister, I understand there may be some confusion, there are a lot of figures, 11,300 submissions. However, as you know, for people to have confidence, you have to know what you're talking about. There seems to be some confusion. I would still like to speak to you before the meetings because what we're doing today is quite important.

You talked about leadership. What I'm seeing right now is that Canada doesn't have a legislative framework for artificial intelligence. It also lacks the sovereign computational capacity needed to get AI systems up and running. It has no binding rules on data governance or on the framework that is based on voluntary mechanisms. So you want to have the most powerful engine in your car, but you don't have the brakes or the legislative framework to go with it.

What do you say to that?

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Thank you for the question.

We will, as I have promised, provide an update of Canada's privacy and data laws, the PIPEDA. We are finalizing the legislation, which is very important, and I'm glad you're asking about it.

People do need to know that the legislation still exists. It is not a void, but we need to update it. It is important to update it, and we will be putting forward that legislative framework, that piece of legislation, soon. We're just putting the finishing touches on it to get it right.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Minister, you said that the legislation governing artificial intelligence exists. What is the title of that act?

I'm not aware of it.

[*English*]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Well, we haven't tabled the legislation yet, but, as I said, we will be tabling the legislation very shortly. We're working on it, and we will be tabling it.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** On what date will you be tabling the bill, Minister?

[*English*]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Well, I'm hoping it's going to be very soon, in this quarter. We'll table it as soon as we believe it's ready, but I think it's important not to rush. We have to move quickly, but we have to move prudently and responsibly. This technology is changing quickly, and we have to make sure that we get this right, to make sure that Canadians' privacy and data are protected, while at the same time making sure that we are not constraining innovation. It's a very important balance.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** It's important not to rush things, but it's also important to have a plan to reassure people. You are appearing before the committee today, and you don't know when your documents were made public. You don't know when you'll be introducing a bill to provide a framework for artificial intelligence.

This is serious, Mr. Minister. Do you really have a plan or are you building the plane mid-flight?

[*English*]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, I do know the dates, so let me just repeat. Today, the documents went public. I'm happy to talk about those. We will very shortly have a piece of legislation on privacy and, as I said, we will be launching and introducing our AI national strategy this quarter. We're very much looking forward to it. We're working hard to make sure that it's comprehensive, that it provides AI for all, and that it's a responsible plan.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** On what date will the strategy be tabled, Minister?

[*English*]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** The strategy will be tabled this quarter. We are making sure that we get the exact right strategy—

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** There is no bill or date for your strategy. You don't know where you're going. That's pretty much it.

[*English*]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Well, it will be very.... I'm glad that you're enthusiastic about it. I appreciate the enthusiasm.

It will be coming very soon.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'm sorry for interrupting. Time is up for MP Blanchette-Joncas.

We will now start our second round of five minutes and two and a half minutes. We will start with MP Ho for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

**Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC):** Thanks, Madam Chair.

Minister Solomon, you announced, throughout last year, that your government is going to adopt AI into the government to deliver better service for Canadians. What kinds of cuts in the public service are we talking about?

Amazon recently announced that they had to cut 16,000 jobs globally because of AI adoption, so I'm wondering, for an enterprise like the federal government, how many jobs we're talking about.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** We are very proud of the program of savings that this government has overseen, because we believe in investing in people. There's more money for programs. AI is meant to enhance the capability of our government to serve Canadians. As we adopt AI, it should help the service.

Let me give you one example. We created an AI tool to help us summarize and work with the 11,000 submissions. That could have taken between eight and nine months, but we did it in about eight days. Those are the kinds of savings and efficiencies I think people would like to see.

**Vincent Ho:** Okay. It's good to know that you're endeavouring to improve service for Canadians. I think we can all agree that's a great endeavour.

Are you saying that no jobs are going to be cut? You just answered my question with improving service without cutting those jobs.

• (1605)

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** I'm saying that we are committed, as a government, to finding efficiencies and to finding savings and to serve Canadians better, and if we use Canadian technology—

**Vincent Ho:** Where are those savings coming from?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —and Canadian AI tools to make sure that we deliver faster, better service, we will invest in that.

**Vincent Ho:** Where are those savings coming from? You just said that you're going to endeavour to improve service delivery and that you're going to find savings somehow, so where are the savings coming from? Of course, implementing those AI tools is going to have a cost, too, so where are those savings coming from?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Well, let me just say that I am delighted that the member is enthusiastic about the use of efficient tools. I know that, during the campaign, your party wanted to cut all funding for AI initiatives to zero—

**Vincent Ho:** How much is—

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —so, now that—

**Vincent Ho:** How much is the adoption of AI going to cost the government? I mean, there's going to be a cost associated with implementing AI, and then hopefully we're going to see some savings down the road, but how much is the initial cost going to be?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Well, we believe that investing in Canadian tech companies is an important role. We believe government has a job not only to buy in Canada. That's why we did the—

**Vincent Ho:** Okay, but that's not the question—

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —memorandum of understanding with Cohere. That's why all procurement will go through SSC and PSPC and will follow all the processes—

**Vincent Ho:** Okay, there's going to be more procurement, so there's going to be more buying and more spending. Where are the costs?

You said there are going to be efficiencies and cost savings. Where are they going to come from? Can you name one example?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Well, I did name an example. I'm happy to name—

**Vincent Ho:** You named an example of how to improve service delivery—

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** But—

**Vincent Ho:** —but you didn't name an example of cutting costs. You said there are costs that are going to be cut. Is it going to be a head count or program cuts or—

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, I know this member understands business. If you can utilize an AI tool to cut the time that it would take a department to go from eight months to eight days, that frees us up to do other things—

**Vincent Ho:** Then what do we do with that excess time? I do understand time—

**The Chair:** Let's have one person at a time.

**Vincent Ho:** Where would that excess time—

**The Chair:** Wait one second. I have stopped the clock. We have a point of order.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** I have a point of order.

[*Translation*]

I would just like to mention that, when my colleague speaks at the same time as the witness, it becomes difficult for me to hear the interpretation.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes. I will request from the member that one person speak at a time. Please allow the witness to answer the question. If two people are speaking, it creates interpretation problems.

**Vincent Ho:** Thank you.

I'll rephrase the question.

You just mentioned there's going to be excess time for those public servants. What are you going to do with that time? Are we going to have them do more, or are we just going to have them do less, because now they don't need to do as much, with all the tools that are going to be implemented?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** It's a great question. Again, I absolutely appreciate it.

We have a huge mandate. We have so much work to do as a government to make sure that we're investing the right dollars in our infrastructure. That's why we have the compute access fund, the public compute fund. We have diligence to do on all of that to make sure that our investments are done wisely. We have to make sure that our plan is implemented—

**Vincent Ho:** You mentioned how your investments are done wisely—

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** There's lots of work to do. I assure you there's lots of work.

**Vincent Ho:** How do you measure whether those investments are done wisely? Do you have any metrics or tools you're going to use?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, that's a great question.

Every time there is an investment, for example in our public compute access fund, there is a diligence process to make sure that these companies qualify and that they are spending in a way that will help their business and promote innovation here in Canada. Every program has KPIs, and we're making sure our investments are done wisely.

**The Chair:** The time is up for MP Ho.

We will proceed to MP McKelvie for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

**Jennifer McKelvie (Ajax, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for joining us again to share your work on AI.

Last week, we heard from witnesses about the importance of AI in the production and distribution of electricity. How are you working with energy companies to unleash the power of AI?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, we are at this historic transformation. We know that we have this moment of political realignment happening at the same time as a technological transformation, and that means that the incentive to build a sovereign country and our sovereign infrastructure is really critical.

Your question about energy and a safe, efficient energy grid is critical, not only to our country but also to our government's plan across government. That's why we have the Major Projects Office to help do that. That's why Minister Hodgson is seized with that and why we're working so closely with the provinces.

We speak regularly to our provinces. In fact, just in the last number of weeks, I've had a federal-provincial-territorial series of meetings so that I can find out exactly what kind of grid capacity the provinces are estimating they need, not just for the economy of the future and AI but also for lots of other projects. They included discussions of electricity and infrastructure.

One of the things I should mention is that, while we do need electricity to power this AI revolution to create jobs and serve Canadians, AI is also serving the electricity grid.

I was here in Ottawa through NRCan's energy innovation program and at Hydro Ottawa with Minister Hodgson, and we invested \$6 million here. They've built this remarkable AI program here to predict demand and to optimize the grid. What does that mean in the real world? It means that they can be significantly more efficient. They can make sure that in peak moments, they won't have outages. They can manage their supply and they can manage people's rates. There, AI is working on both sides: It's helping to power the economy of the future, but it's also helping to manage our energy supply more efficiently.

• (1610)

**Jennifer McKelvie:** I'm certainly excited about smart grids and what can come from that.

Data centres, though, as you mentioned, do have large energy requirements. How are we planning for this increased demand? Are we having conversations about what sort of technologies they could use at site and how they can make sure that these are built in, or how they are trying to site them in locations where there is energy demand? How are we working in that regard?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** It's a great question.

I should say that recently in Quebec City I was visiting a data centre called QScale: privately invested, a remarkable facility there, clean energy. This is a clean-energy facility, about 170 megawatts. They've built about half of it. It's a brand new facility. It's highly secure. It is clean energy. They use what's called a closed-loop water system so they're reusing water. They're not draining the water supply at all. They have their own step-down power, so it's very efficient. They have redundancy. They're creating jobs, hundreds and hundreds of jobs for many years, to build the facility. Then they create a big ecosystem. They've invested \$1.2 billion into the Quebec economy. That's one company. It shows you that.... They're working with, in that case, Hydro-Québec, and they're working very closely with the Quebec government.

In Alberta, AESO, the regulator there, has released some grid power, about 1.2 gigawatts of grid power, to build data centres. That's driving billions of dollars in investment there. That's why the Premier of Alberta and Minister Nate Glubish are so pleased to see that the energy is being used to drive investment, and that's happening.

It's also why, and I'll just reiterate, we're investing \$2 billion at the new nuclear facility at Darlington. The Province of Ontario also put in \$1 billion, because we all recognize that we need to build out our electricity grids. They need to be reliable, they need to be safe, and they need to be used to serve Canadians.

**Jennifer McKelvie:** I'll squeeze in one more question.

Canada has really, I think, punched above our weight in AI with the pan-Canadian strategy. How are we making sure that we're going to use our AI ecosystem to stay competitive internationally? How are we going to keep that lead?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** It's a great question. We have the lead in science and research. We are among the top in the world in terms of publications in journals and patents. We've been a leader.

The real challenge for us, and this is why we're relaunching the mission, is to make sure that we convert the remarkable scientific lead that we have at our universities, at our national AI institutes, into commercialization. How are we doing that? That is why we're investing in our compute access fund, to make sure that our small and medium-sized businesses have access to the tools, and that's why we're investing in the infrastructure.

**Jennifer McKelvie:** Thank you.

• (1615)

**The Chair:** The time is up for MP McKelvie.

We will proceed to MP Blanchette-Joncas for two and a half minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, you said before that the 11,300 submissions were going to be published on the website. I just checked, and it's more of a summary of contributions. So what you told me is not true. It's not true that they are public.

How can the public trust you today if you refuse to tell us publicly who took part in this consultation that will enable you to develop the artificial intelligence strategy?

[*English*]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Madam Chair, I really hope that the honourable member checks the record. I said the summaries would be online. It's exactly what I said. The summaries are online. As I said, those were my words earlier in the committee. I'd be happy if he goes back and reads the record on that.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** That's perfect.

[*English*]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** But the summaries—

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Why, then, are you refusing to tell us who took part in the public consultation?

Why don't you want to release the names of those people and what they said?

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** We are very happy to have provided the summaries. Over 11,000 members of the public contributed to this summary. We're not publishing the names of 11,000 Canadians here, but we are giving a summary of exactly what they said. That's a very transparent process, along with the 28 task force members. The honourable member asked about it, and we're very happy that it's available now for him to see.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Minister, would you refresh my memory on journalistic standards, which are certainly within your area of expertise. Transparency builds credibility.

Today you are telling us that you prepared a summary of your public consultation, in which 11,300 individuals participated, that the process is transparent and that we can have confidence in it.

Have you forgotten what transparency is, Minister?

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, thank you for the question.

We had an open, transparent process. We had a public consultation, which, by the way, was very valuable. I thank the members of the public for contributing. I thank the 28 members of the task force. We've published those—

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** That's not true.

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —for everybody to see and to read. We selected 28 members—

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** No.

[English]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —and I urge the public to read those profoundly interesting submissions.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Mr. Minister, as a journalist you know that naming sources provides transparency. Right now, you're not telling us which sources will influence your artificial intelligence strategy. So don't pretend that you're being transparent today.

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting. The time is up for MP Blanchette-Joncas.

We will now proceed to MP Mahal for five minutes.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, thanks for coming for the questioning.

Have you heard of chatbot Charlie?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Yes.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** Okay. You know that it's a CRA chatbot worth \$18 million that allows Canadians to ask questions in regard to taxes and CRA.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Yes.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** Okay. Do you also know that the Auditor General's report mentioned that this \$18-million chatbot answered only two questions correctly, out of six questions that were asked to test it?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** I don't know the figures. I'm not familiar with the figures on chatbot Charlie.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** If I were to tell you that the percentage of correct answers that come out of that AI chatbot that the CRA heavily invested in is only 33%, would that be okay?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** It's your time.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** If I take that example, does all government AI give wrong answers the majority of the time?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, the process.... I'm not familiar with the process of who built chatbot Charlie. I'm happy to investigate that, but I would be very hesitant, as any good analysis—

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** It's a simple yes-or-no question.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —is not to infer results of one thing from another. That is not what one would do. One would investigate every single circumstance, as opposed to drawing conclusions based on an anecdote.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** Minister, the Auditor General herself confirmed that out of six questions asked, the chatbot was only able to answer two questions correctly, so that takes us to a 33% correct answer ratio.

My question was simple: Does all government AI give wrong answers the majority of the time to the majority of questions, yes or no?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, I really appreciate the question. I won't comment on this specific situation, but I will say that we are working very closely on any system inside government to deliver accurate services. If it's not accurate, there's a process to fix it. I don't have a comment on that particular incident.

• (1620)

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** You don't have an answer, or perhaps you don't want to give that answer. That's fine.

Let's move on to the next question, Minister.

If I take the same example of the same robot, that is technically doing the job of a CRA agent. Is that correct?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, you're asking me about CRA, and I—

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** No, I'm asking you about the AI that was put for CRA.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Right. I'm happy you're asking.

As you know, all public servants are subject to Treasury Board rules—

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** Minister, I only have limited time, and this is not—

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —and CRA is not necessarily—

**The Chair:** Can you please allow the minister to respond to the question? Please go one person at a time, because it creates interpretation problems.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** If the minister is dodging my questions, then—

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Can I—

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** —my time is eaten out. I have to stop the minister if his answer is not directed toward the question and is going off the question line.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** I can clarify that.

The broader public service is subject to Treasury Board. That would avoid those situations. As you know, CRA is not subject to those TBS rules, so it's a little more difficult for me to comment on that.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** Let's move on, Minister.

How many years of technical or regulatory experience do you have to be appointed to this AI ministry?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Can you repeat the question?

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** How many years of technical or regulatory experience do you hold, so that you were appointed as a minister of AI?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Well, I've been working in this industry, as you know... I started the first digital magazine, Shift magazine, over 25 years ago, and I spent many years in the digital industry. I worked in this industry in my former job as well. We had a very deep focus on AI, but I have not sat on a regulatory body.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** You do not have any technical degree or regulatory diploma that backs you up as an AI minister.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** A regulatory diploma, no.... Again, I'm not sure what a regulatory diploma is, but—

**Jennifer McKelvie:** Okay. Thank you.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** —maybe the member can tell me. I'm happy to look into where I can get a regulatory diploma. I don't know what that is.

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** By “diploma”, I mean, do you have any formal technical degree or a course giving you the required education to hold the position you are supposed to have?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Again, let me just answer the honourable member.

I'm not sure what litmus test people need to get into politics. I've been an entrepreneur. I know your leader has never been in private business before, but he's the leader. That's fantastic. I welcome anybody to join the public service and serve—

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal:** I love the way the honourable member—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting.

MP Mahal, your time is up.

Please be respectful of the witnesses and allow them to answer the questions.

We will now proceed to MP Deschênes-Thériault for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Thank you, Minister, for being with us today.

As you know, in Canada, we have world-class expertise in artificial intelligence. Over the past decade, various local skills have been developed at our large and smaller universities alike.

As part of our national artificial intelligence strategy, how are we going to provide targeted support for the expertise, innovation and capacity building in artificial intelligence at these small and medium-sized post-secondary institutions?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Thank you, that's a good question.

I agree that small and medium-sized post-secondary institutions are critically important. Institutions such as the University of New Brunswick and Acadia University play an outsized role in their communities and in their regional economy.

[*English*]

Not only that, we have the CIFAR chairs, and I think they play a really important role. They are critical to our AI strategy, which I'm glad to talk about. Almost \$443 million in federal funding is committed to chairs who support higher education and drive that higher education. They're going to continue to feature prominently in our national AI strategy, and I look forward to sharing that very soon with this committee and with the members.

Our AI leadership is rooted, as you talked about, in our universities and our post-secondary institutions. We have world-class education institutions, and I've named some. Many of our universities across this great country, from Waterloo and Sherbrooke to UBC and the University of Alberta.... There are some fantastic institutes—and colleges, by the way, play a huge role.

I've talked about the national AI institutes—Mila, Amii and Vector—and the Canadian CIFAR AI chairs, which are core assets. All of those are contributing to our research strength, and they are attracting the top talent that comes to Canada. That's really important to create the environments.

I do want to say one thing, because I know there is concern about jobs and making sure that we have the education to give the skills and the training to Canadians, not just when they're in post-secondary, but from K to 12, which is a provincial responsibility. We believe it's very important as well to make sure that people have the skills and training in colleges and in post-secondary, universities, and even beyond that to benefit from this. We're ensuring that our education system is core to building this economy of the future.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Thank you.

As you mentioned, artificial intelligence has the potential to have a significant impact on our economy. Our government was elected with a mandate to strengthen the Canadian economy. We're also investing—

[*English*]

**Vincent Ho:** I have a point of order.

My translation is not working. Could we just get a sound check on the translation?

**The Chair:** Okay, I will stop the clock and check that.

**Vincent Ho:** I appreciate that. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Can you hear me now?

[*English*]

How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** You have a minute and 17 seconds.

[*Translation*]

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Thank you.

We are investing in artificial intelligence research. How are we going to make sure that the advances in research translate, on the ground, into innovations within companies to really strengthen the Canadian economy?

In other words, how are we going to foster synergies between the private sector, investors, research centres and public institutions?

[*English*]

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** It's a great question.

[*Translation*]

Again, thank you for the question.

[*English*]

One of the ways we are supporting the commercialization of our research is to make sure we're driving the ability of our great researchers to keep their ideas and their innovation here in Canada.

How are we supporting that? One way is through clusters like Scale AI. We help these companies scale their technologies and their ideas here and form companies and gain access to capital. That's really important. Our institutes also help create innovation hubs.

I'll point to a really great development just last week that I'm very happy to talk about. I know we've been asked about what we've been doing recently in a concrete fashion; just a couple of weeks ago, Inovia, one of Canada's best venture capital funds, partnered with Mila, our AI institute in Montreal, alongside Amii and Vector, to make sure that scientists who may not know how to translate their great ideas into business have the capacity and the seed funding and even the mentorship to do that. That makes sure those ideas stay here in Canada.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting. Time is up for MP Deschênes-Thériault.

We will end this panel at 4:35 p.m. We will have two minutes for each party before we end this panel. Then the minister will leave, and we will have a round of questioning with the officials.

MP Baldinelli has two minutes.

Please go ahead.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, on December 15, you announced a major new quantum initiative. As part of phase one, the government has signed agreements with four “Canadian-headquartered firms...for up to \$23 million each to accelerate the development of fault-tolerant quantum computers that demonstrate industrial application.”

What are the guardrails that exist in terms of those agreements with each company? It says “Canadian-headquartered” companies. What's to stop or preclude one of those companies from hiring U.S. firms?

• (1630)

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** First of all, again, I really appreciate your raising this point, because it's important that we keep our quantum companies here. There is a program, as I'm sure the honourable member knows, in the U.S. Some companies qualify for a U.S. program, and we're concerned, of course, that these companies might leave and take that IP elsewhere. We want to keep it here.

We are very happy that the Canadian quantum champions program is doing just that. Within the agreements, there are standard agreements on taking any money that would preclude a change of ownership or change of location. These are very standard kinds of contract agreements to make sure that if we're supporting companies, they stay here in Canada, they keep their IP here and they keep us secure.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Minister, what we're finding in our discussions and conversations with stakeholders who have come forward is that energy is going to play a huge role in moving forward with any AI strategy. Currently, we don't have the grid capacity. We don't have the number of workers required. We don't have the power that is needed.

How are we going to move forward when that increased demand is going to put such a demand on prices that prices will increase? What's going to be the impact on the average consumer at home if we run into a situation in which these huge AI data centres are demanding power at the expense of consumers?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. The time is up.

Could you give a quick 10-second answer, please?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** It's a great question.

As a 10-second answer, again, it is the provinces and territories that have the regulators, and it is provincial regulators that decide to whom to allocate the power. They are in charge of those rates, as you know, but we are providing support all across the energy spectrum, whether it's building power, investing in things like Darlington, or even, as part of the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, investing in great companies that are building the transformers that are crucial to that power ecosystem, such as Northern Transformer. It's a really important question.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll now proceed to MP McKelvie for two minutes.

**Jennifer McKelvie:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

You did mention FedDev Ontario. I know that's also an important role that you are covering.

Besides the regional artificial intelligence initiative—and maybe you could tell us a bit about that—can you also highlight some of the different things that are happening through southern Ontario to support the adoption of AI?

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** Southern Ontario is being hit hard by the trade war. We all appreciate that this region is being very powerfully affected because of the auto sector and the steel sector. FedDev, alongside Mélanie Joly, the Minister of Industry, is making sure that we invest in our auto workers, in our tier one and tier two suppliers to those auto plants, and in our steel industry.

As FedDev Ontario, we are supporting those advanced manufacturers. We've done that directly to invest in them, not only with our regional tariff relief, but also with a new program to help them pivot toward national defence, so it's a dual-use fund. Many of those investments are high-tech. We are investing in companies.

Let me give you an example of a company called Ecopia AI. That company maps all buildings around the world. It is an advanced AI-based tech model that employs people. It has remarkable technological achievements, but it is dual-use for military as well. It helps the men and women serving us in places like Latvia right now.

We're investing in companies not only to make sure that the current industries are here for the future—auto and steel—but also to make sure that these advanced manufacturers have the tools to manufacture in the future and to build in this new economy.

FedDev has also invested in companies. Another example is Ada. There are many great examples in this ecosystem.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting. Your time is up.

**Jennifer McKelvie:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We will end this panel with MP Blanchette-Joncas for two minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would simply like to say that I will be tabling a motion. Today, we have before us a strategy that the government describes as important. It says it wants to be a world leader. This will require public funds and major technological choices, not to mention issues related to fundamental rights. The government still refuses to disclose who was consulted and what input was received. We're being told there's a summary. There is therefore a lack of transparency, which I think is incompatible with ministerial accountability and the role of this committee. The motion seeks to order the production of documents that should already have been made public. It reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), the Standing Committee on Science and Research order the Department of Industry and the Department of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation to table, within seven (7) days of the adoption of this motion, all of the following documents relating to the development, content, governance, and implementation of the Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy, namely:

The complete list of all stakeholders—individuals, organizations, companies, institutions, or governments—who participated, directly or indirectly, in the public consultation, targeted consultations, or preparatory work, including identification of any contributions received anonymously, as well as any analysis, note, or justification that allowed for the acceptance of anonymous contributions;

All briefs, written submissions, comments, questionnaires, responses, and documents transmitted, in their entirety, whether solicited or unsolicited.

I hope to have the support of my colleagues. This is a matter of transparency and credibility. If what was written is sound, then the public should normally know about it. Right now, even we parliamentarians can't fully know the outcome or nature of the public consultations.

• (1635)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Blanchette-Joncas.

We will suspend the meeting so that the motion can be circulated to all the members.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, the motion was already distributed to my colleagues before the meeting, so I don't see the need to suspend the meeting.

[English]

**The Chair:** I haven't seen the motion before. I will have to suspend the meeting to provide an opportunity for all members to look at the motion, and the minister has to leave.

We will suspend the meeting so the minister can leave and the officials can join us for the second panel while we look into this motion.

Thank you, Minister, for appearing before the committee and taking the time to talk about your mandate.

**Hon. Evan Solomon:** It was a pleasure. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** The meeting is suspended for a few minutes.

• (1635) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1650)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting to order.

We have a motion on the floor from MP Blanchette-Joncas. The motion has been circulated to all the members in both official languages. We have the witnesses—the officials.

Thanks a lot for coming. I'm sorry for this delay. We will have to deal with this motion before we can start the round of questioning with you.

MP Blanchette-Joncas, go ahead

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, when a committee member moves a motion, does their speaking time stop, or does it keep running?

[English]

**The Chair:** The time stops and you have the floor. Please go ahead.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, I would like to raise a question of privilege, because you suspended the meeting and you let....

Madam Chair, I would like you to listen to me when I speak to you. It's a matter of respect, after all. Are you listening to me?

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, I'm listening. Please go ahead.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** That's perfect.

As a member of this committee, I feel that my parliamentary privilege has been violated. You suspended the meeting to ask my colleagues to study the motion I tabled, but you let the witness go. I had two minutes left to ask the minister questions, and now he's gone. So my parliamentary privilege has been violated. I would like you to explain how you are going to resolve this situation.

[English]

**The Chair:** The minister was here for one hour. We started the meeting, and at 4:36 we had to end the meeting. After an hour, he

had to leave; he had some other commitments. It was said right at the beginning that the minister would have to leave because of some other commitments.

That's what it is.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** That's not what the minister confirmed to us, Madam Chair. He was willing to wait here. You could have let me ask my questions for two minutes and then suspended after that.

So why didn't you do that?

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you for raising that question.

As I told you, like we said at the beginning, the minister had to leave. The motion had to be circulated to all the members in both official languages before we could continue the debate on that motion. That's why I suspended the meeting.

If you would like to challenge my ruling, that is perfectly fine. You can challenge it. I made a decision. That's what it was, so that members would have the opportunity to go through the motion before we tabled that.

That's what it is.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, my parliamentary privilege is currently being violated. I understand that you may have acted quickly at the time, but do we agree that I lost my speaking time because I moved a motion? It shouldn't be.

Could you have suspended the committee meeting so that my colleagues could have the information and the minister could leave? I would have had my two minutes and then there would have been no problem. Right now, I understand that your strategy is to ask me to challenge your decision, which is nothing new. However, I'm entitled to ask this question, because I did lose the speaking time I would normally have had.

• (1655)

[English]

**The Chair:** To clarify in regard to the question you have asked, you tabled a motion. Once that is done, the debate happens. Until that motion is voted on or the debate is adjourned, we continue on that. So that every member would have the opportunity to read the motion, I had to suspend.

[Translation]

**Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I may have a solution to propose to my colleague. I recognize that it's always difficult when you don't have time to ask your questions.

It's not under my authority, but if my colleague wishes, we could ask the minister to answer his questions in writing. That would allow us to continue our work, but it's up to my colleague to decide.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Noormohamed, for your intervention.

As a member of the committee, you made a choice to table the motion.

Everyone knew; it was announced at the beginning. The minister had informed us. The notice of motion was amended to say that the minister had to leave one hour after we started the meeting, at 4:36 p.m.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, would it have been possible to allow me to ask the minister my questions for two minutes and then suspend the meeting so that my colleagues could read the motion?

[English]

**The Chair:** You did not suggest that at that time. You tabled the motion, and it had to be circulated.

I made this decision. The meeting was suspended, and now we are back. Would you like to continue now?

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, I just want to have the same right as my colleagues and to get the speaking time allotted to me to ask the minister questions.

I'm trying to find an amicable agreement. Right now, you're trying to put the blame on me by saying that I didn't propose this. It is certainly not the first time that arrangements have been made to allow a committee member to ask questions when possible. So, yes, I hope it will be possible to have the minister appear so that I can have my speaking time. This is something I would like to explore today with colleagues.

Another point is that the minister was scheduled for two hours. Right now, we have access to him for only one hour, so I invite my colleagues to consider whether it is realistic to simply authorize a speaking right that had normally been agreed upon for a member of this committee.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you for your question.

We invited him. Initially, he agreed to come for two hours, but we were told after that. That's why the clerk sent out an amended notice saying that the minister would only be here for an hour. We do not have control over ministers' calendars, and we can only request them. The time they appear before the committee is up to them. The notice was amended. He had to leave after an hour. He had some other commitments.

I gave two minutes after the second round of questioning. We had approximately six minutes, and I gave it equally to all the parties, two minutes each for the Conservatives, the Liberals and the

Bloc. Then you tabled a motion, and I had to suspend so that the motion could be read by all the members.

Thank you.

Should we proceed with the motion we have?

• (1700)

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, I'm just looking for a solution. Right now, you're telling me that you don't have a solution.

Is that what you're telling me?

[English]

**The Chair:** MP Noormohamed has suggested a solution. If you want to send in your questions, we can request that the minister send the responses.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** How do we go about calibrating this in terms of number of words, in terms of number of questions?

**Jennifer McKelvie:** It's about 200 words.

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** Mr. Blanchette-Joncas, the advantage is that if you ask a question, the minister can take the full two minutes to answer it.

I'm sorry.

[English]

**The Chair:** Please address the comments through the chair, and speak one at a time.

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** MP Noormohamed, do you want to say something?

[Translation]

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** Yes, I just want to say that if you ask a question at the microphone, the minister can take the remaining two minutes to answer, whereas if he responds in writing, his answer may be the equivalent of one, two or 15 minutes. I don't know, but it's to your advantage. It's up to you to decide, I think.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Yes.

[English]

**The Chair:** MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** That's fine, Madam Chair.

I'm going to ask the minister a few questions in writing, and then he can respond to me. I appreciate the co-operation of my colleagues. You understand, I'm just trying to do my job, because many people have worked with us and put in time, effort and energy to formulate these questions. So it's important to ask them. We can find an arrangement, I hope, by respecting the speaking order.

I'm ready, Madam Chair, to vote on this motion so that it can be adopted, I hope.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, MP Blanchette-Joncas. You can send in the questions. We'll try to get an answer.

Now we have the motion on the floor.

MP Noormohamed.

[*Translation*]

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** We have read our colleagues' motions, and we agree with most of them.

At this point, Madam Chair, I would like to move some amendments, if I could.

I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), the Standing Committee on Science and Research order the Department of Industry and the Department of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation to table, sixty (60) days following the adoption of this motion, all of the following documents, from September 1, 2025 to the present, relating to the development, content, governance and implementation of the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy, namely:

Then it goes on as my colleague wrote. Later, after the word “unsolicited”:

and that the information be in compliance with information that would be given via an Access to Information and Privacy request.

These are small changes that I think will improve the motion. In particular, they are in line with what my colleague wants. That gives the minister a little more time to make changes.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you for this amendment. Can you please email it to the clerk so that it can be circulated to all the members?

Now we have an amendment on the floor. I'll suspend the meeting for a few minutes so that this amendment can be sent to the clerk and circulated to all the members.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1700) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1705)

**The Chair:** I call this meeting to order.

We have an amendment to the motion of MP Blanchette-Joncas. The amendment has been circulated to all the members of the committee.

Seeing no hands raised, can we go to a vote on the amendment?

MP Noormohamed, can you please confirm the date on that? Is it September 1?

• (1710)

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** It's September 1, yes.

I thought it was in there. I'm sorry.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Cédric Taquet):** Okay. Is it 2025?

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** That's correct, yes. It's the date of the launch.

**The Clerk:** In French it says this:

[*Translation*]

“*de la première septembre*”.

[*English*]

I just wanted to make sure.

[*Translation*]

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** It's “*du premier septembre*”. I'm sorry.

[*English*]

**The Clerk:** That's perfect. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** We have an amendment.

Go ahead, MP Baldinelli.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Chair, I have some questions with regard to the request that was made by my honourable colleague.

We've gone from a seven-day turnaround to 60 days. Perhaps I would suggest to seek my honourable colleague's views on whether we can reduce that to 30 days instead of 60 days.

Then the information at the end—“That the information be in compliance with information that would be given via an Access to Information and Privacy request”—fundamentally alters the request that this committee has put forward. The information that we have asked for as parliamentarians, and that my colleague has put forward, is information that we have every right to ask for as parliamentarians. When we get that information, if we want to discuss it in camera, we can do so, but this request fundamentally alters what will be given to us and is not in line with the request that my colleague has made.

My suggestion would be to eliminate that end part, and then, instead of 60 days, make it 30 days.

**The Chair:** Okay. Are you proposing a subamendment?

**Tony Baldinelli:** Yes, that would be my suggestion.

**The Chair:** Okay. Now we have a subamendment on the floor.

Is there debate on the subamendment?

MP Noormohamed, go ahead.

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** In the first part of the subamendment that my colleague has put forward, if folks can get their stuff together in 30 days, I have no issue with that. This is not a question of trying to stall; it's quite the opposite. I would also very much like to see these materials. I think most of us would. If we can agree that we request 30 days—and we have to be understanding if folks come back and say they need an extra week or two, or whatever—I think we can live with that.

My friend opposite has raised the issue around whether we want to include this language about the law itself, particularly what happens in the case of this ATIP language. I would just take us back to a previous conversation where we were dealing with the issues of the researchers and what happened when we decided we were going to take a certain path in terms of the nature of the disaggregated, anonymized route. When we went down that road, we ended up very quickly having to come back and reflect on the decision we had made as a team, and we came to a different conclusion.

I'm concerned about starting down the road saying we want 11,000 individual responses that people gave, without any guardrails. Just to be clear, if it's within the bounds of the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act, and if all of that can be given, then I think it should absolutely be given to us and should be there. However, we are also, as parliamentarians, bound by that legislation.

The question is this: How do we make sure that we don't put ourselves in a situation where, in a few days or a week, we get an opinion back from somebody who tells us that what we've proposed doesn't make sense and, more importantly, that this is outside the bounds of what is allowed?

When I made that amendment, the intention was not to try to prevent the committee from getting information. It was quite the opposite. I want to make sure that we don't get into a situation where we have to relitigate what we end up being able to put out. That is a concern for me. Thus far on this study, there's a lot of common interest in understanding not only what comes out, but also how the sausage is made, what some of the pieces are around that—the types of submissions we had, the lines of thinking and the lines of inquiry that people put forward—what went into it and how that compares to what comes out the other end when the report is released. I think we're all very interested in how that's going to look.

There's always a question in this place. My colleague from the Bloc is concerned about making sure that there's an accurate reflection of the testimony and what was received. To my mind, a lot of people have given input to this study, to how the strategy is going to look. What comes out the other end through the consultation should take into account all of those different pieces.

I would submit that, as a group, we should want to avoid people cherry-picking certain lines and wondering why those particular lines didn't make their way in, which is fine. The question is, do we try to figure out who the heck said that and interrogate that person to find their relationship to what did or didn't go down in the production of the study?

All this to say, with the spirit of what is being asked and what my Conservative and Bloc colleagues want to do, I think we are very much there. It's not a question of the spirit of what we're trying to do. How do we put the language around this so that the guardrails are there from a protection standpoint? That was the whole intention here. If we can find a different way to get there and to understand that, I think we're totally fine. We have to be mindful, though, of where this can go if we don't end up putting in something that reflects our understanding that we are also bound by the law and jurisdiction in all of this.

Just to be clear, a lot of this is available online right now. I don't know if we want to take a second.... This may be something we can do. We can take a minute, if the member wants to look at it. I guess they may be letting him know that everything that is available is now online. Perhaps he can take a look and see if something is missing. Then we can amend the motion to reflect what my colleague doesn't see that may be helpful to him.

• (1715)

This stuff has just been released, I understand. I'm just getting a message that all of it is now online.

I recommend that we take a minute to let Mr. Blanchette-Joncas see if what he's looking for is actually there. If it's not, let's amend the motion to reflect that, because it may be a moot point. It may save us a whole bunch of hassle, save the department a whole bunch of hassle and let us get back to our work.

[*Translation*]

If I may, Mr. Blanchette-Joncas, I will present—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Please, all conversations should be directed through the chair.

**Taleb Noormohamed:** I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** I have MP Deschênes-Thériault on the speaking list.

To make it clear, we are on the subamendment by MP Baldinelli.

MP Deschênes-Thériault.

[*Translation*]

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

If I understand correctly, we received a motion in writing in both official languages. We then received an amendment to the motion in both official languages. We're debating a subamendment that was presented orally. However, we haven't received it in writing.

To avoid any confusion, we should briefly suspend the meeting so that we can distribute my colleague's subamendment. We did not receive it in writing, and it was not submitted in both official languages.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** MP Baldinelli.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Chair, I'm just going to put forward a motion to adjourn the debate.

We have witnesses here. I'd like to hear from them, and I don't want anything to preclude the fact that we have Minister Joly coming on Thursday.

We can pick this up at another time.

**The Chair:** We have a motion to adjourn the debate. Is everyone in favour?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We will now welcome our witnesses for this panel. I'm sorry for the delay.

We have Associate Deputy Minister Mark Schaan with us. We are also joined by Mr. Nipun Vats, assistant deputy minister, science and research sector.

Welcome. Thanks a lot for appearing before the committee.

We will go to our round of questions. Based on the time we have, we will have a five-minute round for each party. We will start with MP Baldinelli for five minutes.

Please, go ahead.

• (1720)

**Tony Baldinelli:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the officials for being here with us this afternoon.

I just want to carry on and pick up on what I was asking the minister about. That has to do with the new quantum initiative that was announced in December. Again, four hand-selected companies are each receiving \$23 million from the government.

What safeguards are in place to ensure that these companies cannot contract out critical operational components to foreign firms like CoreWeave and that taxpayer dollars are actually strengthening Canadian sovereignty?

[*Translation*]

**Mark Schaan:** Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

The Canadian quantum champions program looks toward advancing our capabilities in fault-tolerant quantum computing. It's actually contributions in companies that will be able to invest in their own activities, to be able to meet certain benchmarks as they relate to the continued proving out of their quantum capabilities.

The contributions in kind with the companies in question follow our standard approach, which includes a number of safeguards in place to ensure the protection of the Canadian public interest as they carry out their activities. That includes meaningful contributions as they relate to their location of enterprise, as well as the continued obligations with respect to intellectual property here in Canada.

**Tony Baldinelli:** You mentioned the location of the Canadian enterprise, but what about what it does with the \$23 million that was granted to the Canadian enterprise? Could they go out and hire a U.S. firm to do work for it as part of that \$23 million that it was granted?

**Mark Schaan:** I think it's really important to understand the nature of the quantum champions program, which is that these are companies that.... Their own innate capabilities as companies, as in their organic capabilities, are being funded for the advancement of their commercialization activities.

We are funding the four companies in question for their activities as they relate to the continued proving out of quantum capabilities. It's in their proof points to meet those quantum benchmarks that we are funding as a function of our continued relationship, as they move through phase one and then, ideally, through the later phases of the program.

**Tony Baldinelli:** If you could understand my questioning and concern.... We had \$240 million given to a Canadian company, Cohere, and one of the first things it did with that money was hire an American, U.S.-based company, CoreWeave, to build out its data centres. Again, we're sitting here discussing how we build a sovereign AI industry, yet American companies are participating in that, instead of direct Canadian company participation. That's why I'm asking that question.

I'm going to move on to my second question. Again, I asked the minister this with regard to the MOU that Cohere signed with the federal government to explore opportunities to deploy AI technologies across the Government of Canada.

Is that MOU a public document?

**Mark Schaan:** The MOU is not a public document.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Are there dollar figures associated with that MOU?

**Mark Schaan:** The MOU is an indication of a strategic relationship and an interest in the strategic value of the companies, both in the case of Cohere and in the case of Coveo. It is not a contract for the purposes of either procurement or retention of services.

**Tony Baldinelli:** They are being paid for their services to explore those opportunities and present reports to the government on what opportunities exist, I would imagine.

**Mark Schaan:** No, the strategic MOU is an indication of the strategic value of the company to the overall ambitions of the government. Each of the subsequent efforts of the government to procure Cohere's or Coveo's technology would be done through the requisite department's normal processes, including either the procurement or other mechanisms.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Who is responsible for determining whether or not there's a possible opportunity for AI to be utilized by that one department?

**Mark Schaan:** I'm sorry. Can you reframe the question?

**Tony Baldinelli:** You're basically saying that it's up to each department. Will each department determine whether or not it uses one of those two Canadian companies to make recommendations to it?

**Mark Schaan:** The MOUs are signed by the Minister of Government Transformation, as well as the Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation. It's a signalling mechanism to indicate the strategic value of the corporation to the Canadian ecosystem. Those two ministers have authorities within their own accountabilities to be able to then go through procurement or other exercises. It's a mechanism by which they are signalling the value both to the ecosystem and then also to other departments as they proceed with their own IT build-outs.

• (1725)

**Tony Baldinelli:** The lack of transparency in that response.... That was great government-speak. I apologize for saying that, but somebody watching at home would have no clue what you just said, no understanding.

I mean, we've signed an MOU with Cohere—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting, but time is up, MP Baldinelli.

With that, we will proceed to MP Noormohamed for five minutes, please.

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the officials for being here today.

One of the things that my part of the country, British Columbia, has always been interested in and leading on is quantum, and of course a lot of substantial and meaningful development in AI as well.

When the department is working through the types of decisions that it's making.... Can you share a little bit—obviously, without disclosing or divulging where things are going to land—about the importance of British Columbia in the development of Canada's view of the world in terms of quantum and AI?

**Mark Schaan:** We are blessed as a country to have extraordinary capability and talent across the entirety of the ecosystem. When the original decision was made about the three institutes, there were many factors that fed into that. I think it's noteworthy that, with the associates, the CIFAR chairs associated with the overall pan-Canadian AI strategy, there is a preponderance of chairs that exist within B.C. academic institutions with relationships to the overall CIFAR chairs. In fact, I think the province argues—and I haven't checked the numbers myself—that it has the largest number of associate chairs by region, outside of those for whom an institute is actually present. That's super valuable and obviously has created a significant amount of capability, particularly as it relates to applied AI.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the quantum ecosystem in British Columbia is extraordinarily rich, and it includes one of the companies that are participating in the Canadian quantum champions program. This company has been leading the world in many ways in terms of the path toward fault-tolerant quantum computing. I think it's safe to say that it is an enormous contributor.

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** Obviously, one of the things I worry about—not just as a former tech entrepreneur, but as a British Columbian and as a Canadian who cares a lot about this space—is making sure that Canadian companies and Canadian winners stay in Canada.

What can you share with us and how would you describe the efforts being made by your department to ensure that Canadian entrepreneurs in this space are able to stay here? Particularly, how can Canadian leaders in their fields, the companies that are really leading—the “champions”, as you call them—make sure they stay in Canada and continue to grow and develop in Canada?

**Mark Schaan:** There are a number of ways we can answer that, I think. One is obviously the \$1.7-billion talent initiative that's been

launched by the government to try to ensure that we are bringing talent and then retaining talent. The CIFAR chairs themselves have funded almost 130 fantastic researchers who've been able to make Canadian institutions their home and develop AI capacities around them, including with their labs and their graduate students.

Also, you can take the genesis of the Canadian quantum champions program in and of itself. It's not a secret that the United States DARPA program has a quantum benchmarking initiative aimed at trying to grow their own quantum capabilities, and they invited Canadian companies, among the world's companies, to participate in a benchmarking initiative that would move them through phases, ultimately with the hope, I think, of trying to ensure that those companies relocate to the United States.

The Canadian quantum champions program is a response to ensure that our Canadian quantum champions have the capacity to grow and retain themselves here in Canada. That's why it was so important that we got through phase one and allowed those four companies to have a pathway to continue their pursuit of quantum capabilities here in Canada.

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** The reason I'm double-clicking on this is that if we listened to my colleagues opposite, folks would be left with the impression that the federal government is giving money to Canadian companies that are then either leaving or giving their money to U.S. businesses. What assurances do Canadians have that the investments the government is making in Canadian businesses and Canadian companies will benefit Canadians?

**Mark Schaan:** The due diligence process of the department is quite rigorous. We have evolved our continued contribution agreement standard clauses, as well as our overall approach, to ensure that we have protections in place and guardrails for Canadians, so that, whether it's research or a company commercialization project, there are effective mechanisms in place to ensure that it serves the public interest.

That varies depending on the nature of the activity. In research, that looks like one thing, whereas in commercialization it often means that we have clauses in place to ensure that there are protections for Canadians and to ensure the retention of intellectual property, of capacity and, ultimately, of Canadian strength.

• (1730)

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** The time is up.

We'll now proceed to MP Blanchette-Joncas for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, I would like a point of information.

Until what time are House of Commons resources available in case we want to extend the work of the committee? I want to make sure so that we don't waste time in the second hour of the study.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We will check on that.

Please proceed with your time.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Could you please check on it right away?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** It will take some time to get an answer. If you want to continue, I'll let you know.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** I'll wait, Madam Chair. I'm a patient man.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** The information goes to the translation services.

Your time is going on, so please proceed. It will take some time to get some answers.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** I'll wait, Madam Chair, if I may.

Since I asked for a point of information, my clock should not continue running, according to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We have to check with them until what time we have the resources available. We cannot make them stay.

I'll suspend the meeting so that we can get some answers.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1730) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1730)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting to order.

We are getting that information.

There is no such thing in any standing order that we have to stop the clock for getting that information. You have two and a half minutes left. You can go ahead with your question, or your clock will keep on running until we find the answer.

**Jennifer McKelvie:** I'm happy to cede my time to the member if he'd like to finish his questions.

**The Chair:** We started at 4:35. The plan was to end the meeting at 5:35. We are checking that information.

If he doesn't want to use his time, that is up to the member, but there is no such thing in the Standing Orders.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Could you just let me know, Madam Chair? You're telling me that when I request information, I'm not allowed to know how long we can extend today's study with House resources.

Is that correct?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** There is no such thing as a point of information, but you have requested information. The clerk is trying to get an answer from the translation services and from the authorities about the time, but I'm telling you that your clock is going on. Your five minutes will come to an end once those five minutes are done.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Let me just understand what's going on, Madam Chair.

I'm still waiting for information. Can you explain to me which standing order states that a request for information to the chair does not prevent a committee member's clock from running?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** There is no such thing as seeking information, or there is nothing in the Standing Orders. You are asking for information. We are getting that for you. However, your clock is running. One minute and 13 seconds are left.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, when I ask for information through you, you tell me that it's part of my speaking time for questions to the witnesses.

Is that correct?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You have requested information, and I have told you that the clerk is trying to find an answer to that. It will take some time.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Yes.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I have explained that to you.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Okay.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Your time is running. On that information, once we get an answer, only then can we give you the answer. We don't have an answer to that right away.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** We can come back to that, Madam Chair.

I'll start my five minutes of speaking time, if I may. I want the same treatment my colleagues get.

Madam Chair, I'm going to ask some questions.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds left.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, I just asked for some information. Now you're telling me that my time is up, when you never notified me of that from the outset. I think it's just about getting the same treatment my colleagues get.

[English]

**The Chair:** I have been telling you—I have emphasized more than once—that your clock is going on. We are getting that information, but your time of five minutes is going on. I have told you that more than once.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Yes, so—

[English]

**The Chair:** I explained that in the beginning. I explained it after we came back from the suspension. Your time is up.

We started the meeting at 3:35. Seeing as we don't have an answer from the translation services yet on whether they have the resources available, but we have completed those two hours, is it the will of the committee to adjourn the meeting?

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** No.

Madam Chair, I made a request for information.

[English]

**The Chair:** MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** From what I understand, today you're not allowing me to ask questions in my last turn. You notified me that I was not going to have my speaking time after suspending the committee meeting. If you had told me that at the outset, I would have understood, but now you're penalizing me for something you notified me about after suspending the meeting.

I wasn't trying to run out the clock unnecessarily. I just wanted to know how much time I had left so that I could focus my questions and prepare my strategy for asking them in the time remaining. I was just asking if we were going to extend the meeting. That's all I was asking.

[English]

**The Chair:** We are trying to find out, but I told you that your clock was running. There is no such thing as a point of information. I have explained that to you. I hope everyone was very clear that the clock was running, and your five minutes were going on while we were trying our best to get that information.

MP Deschênes-Thériault.

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** It's okay.

**The Chair:** MP Noormohamed.

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** In the interest of trying to figure out how we move this thing forward, do we have a sense of how long it might take to get an answer to Mr. Blanchette-Joncas' question, and also to understand what specifically would make everyone feel as though they've been heard so that we can get on with our evening?

**The Chair:** The clerk has sent an email. He hasn't gotten the answer yet. We are really not in a capacity to know until we get an answer in response to the email the clerk has sent.

MP Baldinelli.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Perhaps as a solution, we offer a five-minute round to my colleague. In the interim, if there is no response after the five-minute round, we adjourn the meeting after that period—if there's no response.

• (1740)

**The Chair:** Are all the members okay with that?

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We can start the clock at five minutes. Then we can adjourn the meeting.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for your leniency and co-operation. I also want to thank my colleagues.

I will continue with my five minutes. I'll ask my questions of the deputy ministers.

First, can you submit a written response to the committee with all analyses, notes, legal opinions, risk assessments and policy documents on data sovereignty, dependence on foreign infrastructure or platforms, extraterritoriality of foreign laws and risks to national security, democracy, public safety, privacy and fundamental rights?

Second, can you submit a written response confirming that, for each of the issues raised, no analysis, assessment or opinion was carried out when that was the case?

Third, can you submit a written response with any documents assessing the potentially irreversible impacts of AI technology and infrastructure choices, including concentration of computing capacity, dependence on foreign platforms and strategic data collection, as well as documents outlining the policy options assessed and then discarded and the reasons they were rejected?

Fourth, can you submit a written response, along with any documents outlining whether there are controls, suspensions or shutdowns of AI systems deemed dangerous or high risk, as well as any analysis, notes or correspondence expressing reservations, disagreements or warnings, including ones that were rejected?

Fifth, can you submit a written response with all documents relating to agreements, contracts with Canadian or foreign companies, public costs, financial commitments and long-term obligations, legal compliance, including with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and privacy laws, impacts on the provinces, including Quebec, internal timelines, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and the identification of decision-making bodies that approved the directions chosen?

Those are my five questions, which touch on several major aspects of the artificial intelligence strategy.

Gentlemen, I would now like to hear you tell us verbally what you have suggested to the government in terms of the legislative framework that should support the strategy. According to the minister, it should be rolled out very soon.

**Mark Schaan:** I thank the member for his questions.

Something should be pointed out from the outset. There are a lot of Canadian laws that currently deal with topics related to digital affairs in Canada. In particular, there is now a privacy law at the federal level, but there are also privacy laws in the territories and provinces that protect the personal data and information of all Canadians. That is fundamental.

The minister has indicated that he wants to modernize the bill. That said, it should be pointed out that these laws are currently in place in Canada and they continue to play an important role in protecting Canadians.

It should also be pointed out that there are also a lot of sectoral and other laws that provide Canadians with digital protection. They include health legislation in all provinces and territories, as well as the Canada Health Act.

There are also sectoral laws in the area of finance. For example, there are the guidelines published by the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, or OSFI, which is responsible for governing the conduct of organizations and businesses affected by the Bank Act. Other financial protection laws are in place here in Canada, some of which are transport-related.

There aren't really any areas without any laws. There are many current laws that affect these aspects.

The purpose of the bill, along with the strategy, is to modernize the Privacy Act, including areas that specifically focus on artificial intelligence.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Thank you.

Are we behind or ahead when it comes to the legislative framework for regulating artificial intelligence in Canada?

**Mark Schaan:** That's kind of a tough question, because other countries' approach and regulations are set up in different environments and for different systems.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Deputy Minister, I have to wrap up.

If, tomorrow morning, there were a dangerous artificial intelligence system, would we have the legislative authority to immediately suspend its use?

Is there a clear shutdown mechanism in the act to stop it if it is harmful to the public?

• (1745)

**Mark Schaan:** It depends on the type of harm and the sector, because there are a lot of laws that affect digital activities. I can't give a hypothetical answer about all technologies in every area.

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** I would like the witness to also send us an answer in writing, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry for interrupting. The time is up for MP Blanchette-Joncas.

I really want to thank our witnesses. I'm sorry for all of this. You had to wait here, but I'm really thankful for all the work you do on behalf of all Canadians.

Before we end this meeting, I want to point out some things for all members' information.

On Monday, February 9, we will have committee business to determine the committee's next studies. The clerk has sent a request to all members, which came in from Ms. Jekaterina Rojaka, a member of Parliament in Lithuania and chair of the Canada-Lithuania friendship group at the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania. She will be visiting Ottawa. MP Rojaka will be accompanied by the Lithuanian ambassador to Canada. They welcome the opportunity to discuss enhancing bilateral co-operation in science and research between our two countries, including within the EU-Canada framework and to exchange views on the steps already taken, as well as on the potential avenues for further development of our relations.

If the committee agrees, this meeting can take place on Monday, February 9, 2026. It will be the members' decision whether this meeting should be formal or informal.

Is there any discussion or any suggestions for that? Do the members agree to accept the invitation?

MP Baldinelli.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Madam Chair, you just mentioned that at the same time as that February 9 meeting, we'll be having our future business discussions.

**The Chair:** Yes. If members agree to meet with the group, it can be either formal or informal, and we can have one hour with them and one hour of committee business.

**Tony Baldinelli:** Perhaps we could do it following committee business, so we could have our committee business and then, in an informal manner, have our meeting. Ultimately, we're here for meeting purposes first, and then, if we agree, we can do the meeting afterwards. I don't want to lose that February 9 opportunity.

**The Chair:** Are there any further suggestions? Are members okay with having our committee business for an hour and then having the meeting?

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[*Translation*]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Before I finish, Madam Chair, have we received a response from the interpretation team regarding the resources available for the House?

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, we have some resources available, but I think it was mutually agreed by all members that we would end this meeting after your five minutes.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Until what time are the resources available?

[English]

**The Chair:** The resources are available for a total of three hours—whatever time we have exhausted already, but no more than three hours total.

**The Chair:** MP Baldinelli.

**Tony Baldinelli:** I missed that.

**The Chair:** MP Blanchette-Joncas was asking until what time the resources are available. The resources are available for a total of three hours. Whatever time we have exhausted already comes out of that. They will not be available beyond three hours, but I think everyone agreed mutually that we would end this after five minutes with MP Blanchette-Joncas.

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, did you consult with the committee members? You mentioned that there was an agreement that we would have only five minutes for the second hour of the study. I'm not aware of such an agreement.

[English]

**Taleb Noormohamed:** That's what we had agreed, isn't it?

**The Chair:** That's what was suggested. Before we got that information, it was suggested by MP Baldinelli that we have your five minutes and then we adjourn the meeting. No one raised any objection at that time, so that was the mutual agreement of the members of the committee.

MP Noormohamed.

**Taleb Noormohamed:** I'm just trying to understand. We did what we thought we had agreed to do, which was have an extra round. We have the officials. I know they have to go.

I would propose that we adjourn the meeting. We have the minister coming. We don't want to lose that opportunity. We don't want to do that. Now that everyone's been given their fair time—Mr. Blanchette-Joncas got to have the full five minutes—and in the spirit of continuing to work together, we should adjourn the meeting and make sure that we're ready to fight another day.

• (1750)

**The Chair:** Is it the will of committee members to adjourn the meeting?

MP Blanchette-Joncas.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** I rise on a question of privilege, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** We have a motion to adjourn the meeting.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** No, nothing has been tabled, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** We will have to vote on it—

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** No.

[English]

**The Chair:** —because this is non-debatable.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** The member did not move a motion, Madam Chair. You asked if he was moving a motion.

I want to raise my question of privilege before he moves his motion. That's what I asked.

[English]

**Taleb Noormohamed:** It's fine.

[Translation]

**Maxime Blanchette-Joncas:** Madam Chair, I'm just trying to come to an amicable agreement. I get the feeling that things are a bit topsy-turvy at the moment. You unilaterally decided that there would be only five minutes for all committee members in the second round of questions. You didn't check the House resources beforehand to see if we could continue the study period so that all members of the committee could get the speaking time they should normally have.

That now makes me doubt how this committee operates. Normally, the available resources are checked and then committee members are asked whether they want to continue the meeting. However, what I'm seeing today, Madam Chair, with all due respect, is that you did the opposite and didn't consult the members of the committee.

I'm trying to understand. Today, I lost two minutes in the first hour. You told me that it was up to me to ask if I could do that and table the motion. Then you decided to suspend the meeting without my consent. Again, I even told you that my colleagues had received the motion beforehand.

In the second hour of the meeting, and I asked you once again in good faith, at the start of my speaking time, until what time the resources were available. You told me that you couldn't answer me and that, if I didn't speak right away, my clock would keep running.

Madam Chair, I'm simply trying to do my parliamentary job as a member of this committee and get my full right to speak. It's hard for me to understand why you're trying to push this committee to end when we simply want to ask questions of the witnesses we've been awaiting for several weeks.

[English]

**The Chair:** Before we got to you for the five minutes of questioning, it was mutually agreed by all members, after a suggestion from MP Baldinelli, that we would adjourn the meeting after the five minutes. Every member agreed, and we started with that. That's why I went through some of the things that I had to ask everyone at the end of the meeting before we could adjourn.

MP Noormohamed.

**Taleeb Noormohamed:** I want to make sure that we are all on the same page. The chair indicated that our colleague had used the time. The clock was running. In order to ensure that everybody was treated equitably, Mr. Baldinelli suggested that in the event that we do not get an answer during the course of that period, which did not happen, we would give those additional five minutes to our colleague so that everybody got their five minutes.

I think everyone is trying to work collaboratively. We're doing our best to figure out how we can all get answers to questions when the minister isn't here. We did all the things we could possibly reasonably do, but there is a limit.

I suggested gently that we should adjourn the meeting. I'm now going to move that we adjourn the meeting, noting that we have the minister coming. If we run the clock on this thing, we're going to end up in a situation where the minister isn't going to be there and we're going to have to deal with that.

We are all trying our damndest to make sure that everyone gets the time they need to ask the questions. We did something here that I don't think has been done in a very long time. We said, "You didn't get the last two minutes to ask the minister questions. Submit them in writing." We're doing everything we can as a collective team to try to make this work, but there's a limit.

I'm now going to move that we adjourn the meeting, with the consent of my colleagues.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 8; nays 1)

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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